

Recording Lectures

The university quickly produced a “Keep Teaching” website but I don’t find much useful information there. As I have experience teaching online, I am going to provide a few suggestions and then walk through how you can easily record PowerPoint presentations.

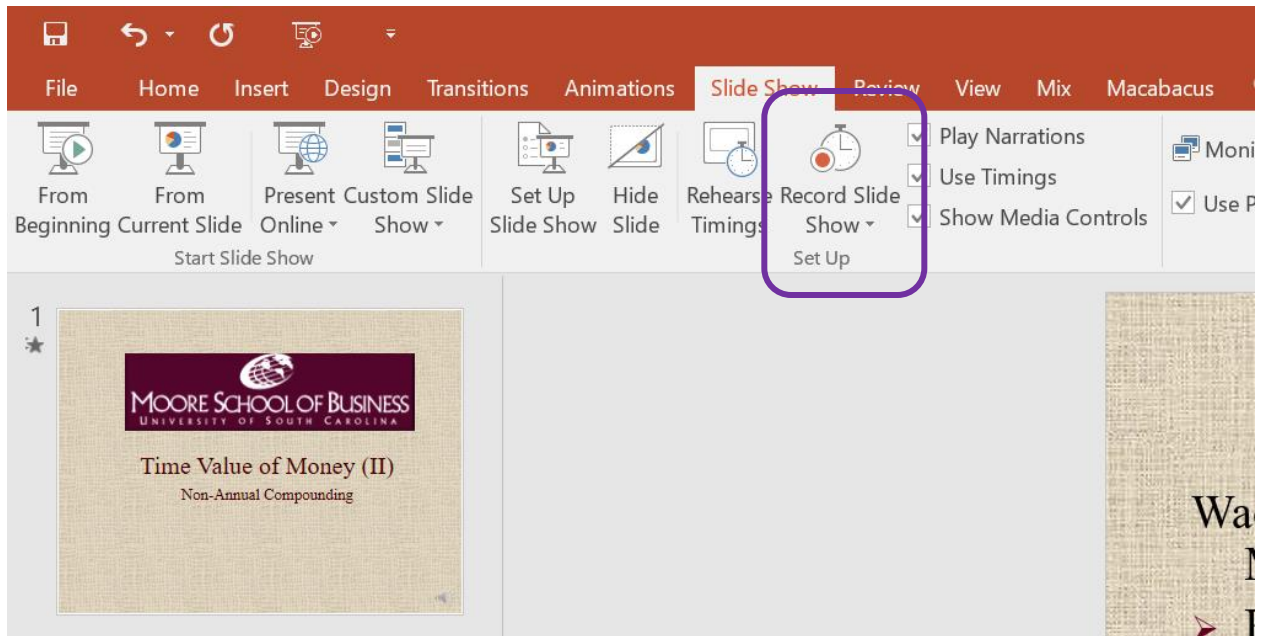
Suggestions:

- Break your lecture into much smaller pieces. People have limited attention spans online. The Keep Teaching website said to keep videos shorter than 15 minutes. I think that you should aim for shorter than 10. As an example, my Time Value of Money (TVM) lecture is broken into 14 shorter blocks. One shorter block, for example, has three PowerPoint slides covering non-annual compounding. Look at Kahn Academy videos. They stick to about 5 minutes. More practically, Blackboard gets finicky when you try to upload files of more than 500mb. Shorter recordings will not exceed this size. Finally, it is really difficult to do long videos without lots of ums and mistakes – trust me!
- As with teaching in a classroom, I find it is much better to write out any formulas and any calculations. Students’ eyes glaze over when you embed actual formulas and numerical solutions directly in PowerPoint. I use a tablet PC with a writable screen. For those that come to campus, you can record in one of the classrooms with a functioning stylus. Just leave blank space on your PowerPoint slide.
- Purchase a decent quality microphone. I purchased mine at the office supply store in Five Points and it cost about \$75 if I remember correctly. This makes a big difference. Make sure you have a quiet area to record, mute your phone, etc.
- Student’s don’t need to see your smiling face, particularly as they already know you. I do picture-in-picture for the first slide of my first block in TVM. After that, it is all narration. Narration only also results in smaller file size.
- Write out at least a script outline for each slide and refer to it as you narrate (a benefit of doing narration only is that no one sees you reading the teleprompter). This reduces your error rate significantly.

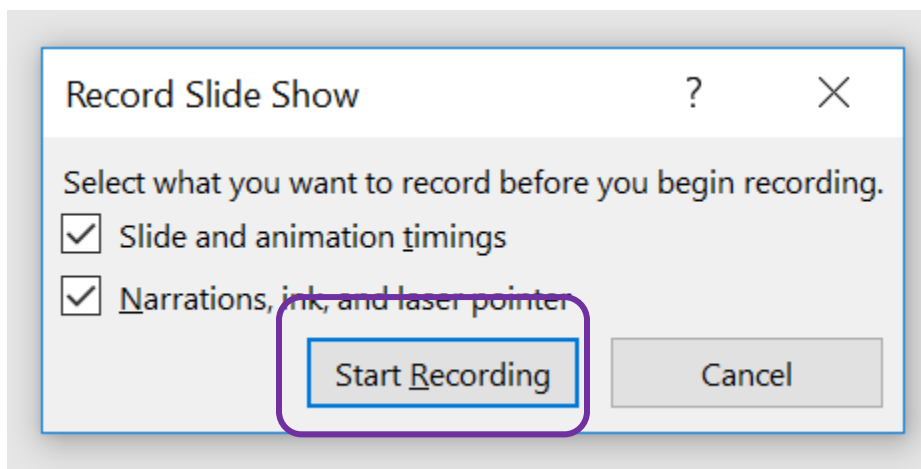
If you already use PowerPoint as a presentation medium, the Record Narration function embedded in PowerPoint is pretty decent. The biggest limitation here is that it is not a screen recording tool so you can’t jump to another application like Excel within a video.

Here are skeletal directions:

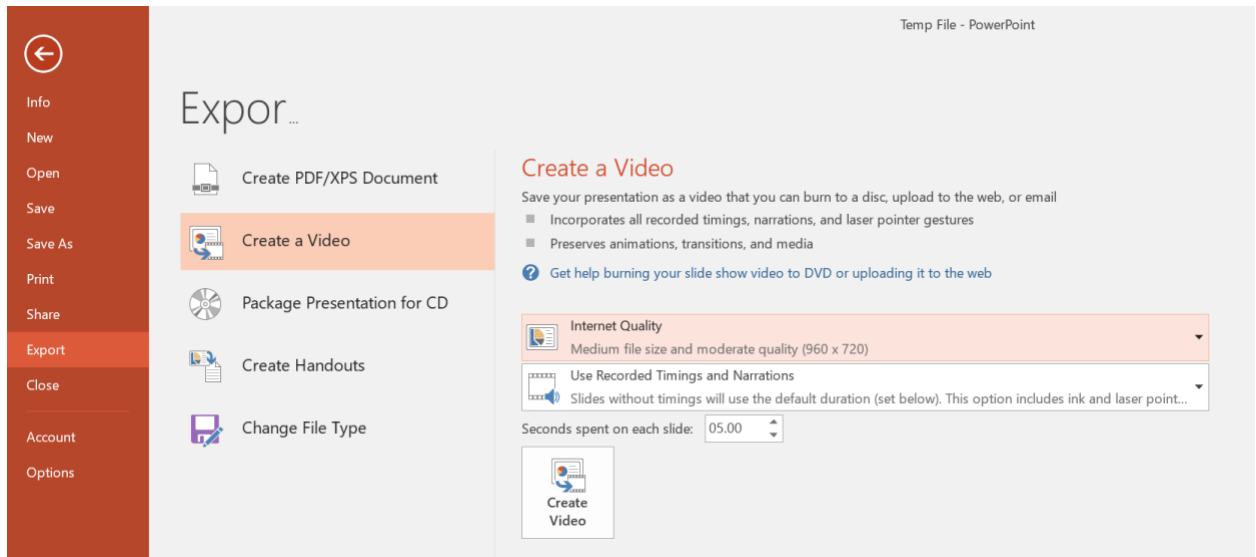
- Isolate the section of lecture that you are going to record. I take my full lecture slide deck and first split it out into all the subsection decks and store these in a separate folder.
- Open the subsection that you are going to record in PowerPoint. Go to the Slide Show tab. There is a Record Slide Show button with options to Record from Beginning, Record from Current Slide and Clear (with four options). In general, you will want to Record from Beginning.



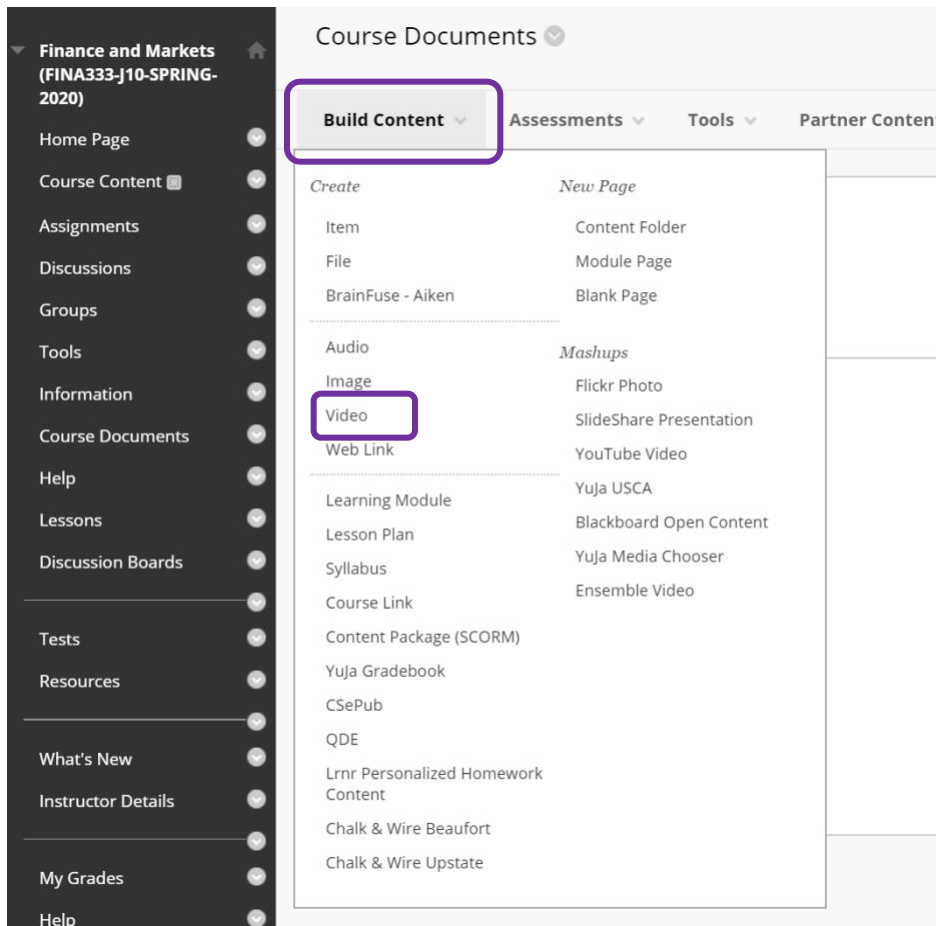
- There are two selection boxes for Slide and Animation Timings and for Narrations, Ink and Laser Pointings. Have both checked. Now hit start recording and let the magic happen.



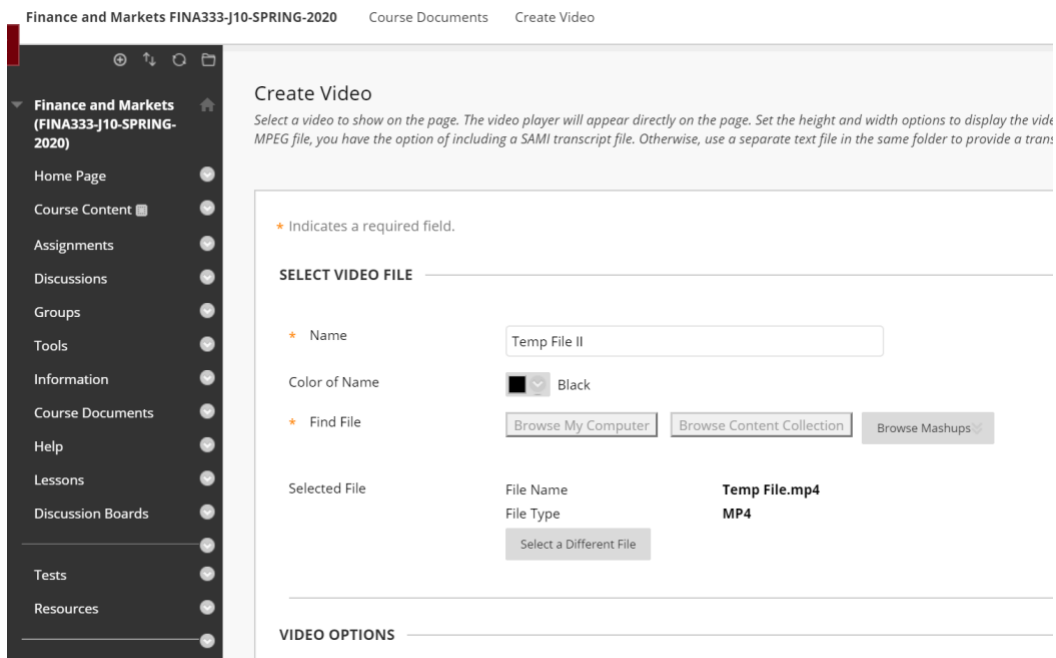
- Once you have finished recording, save the file. From the same File menu, choose Export and export the file with the Create a Video option. This creates an MP4 file. I recommend the medium Internet Quality. Presentation Quality requires a lot of processing time. It takes longer than you would suspect, but the end result is an MP4 file that you can copy to Blackboard.
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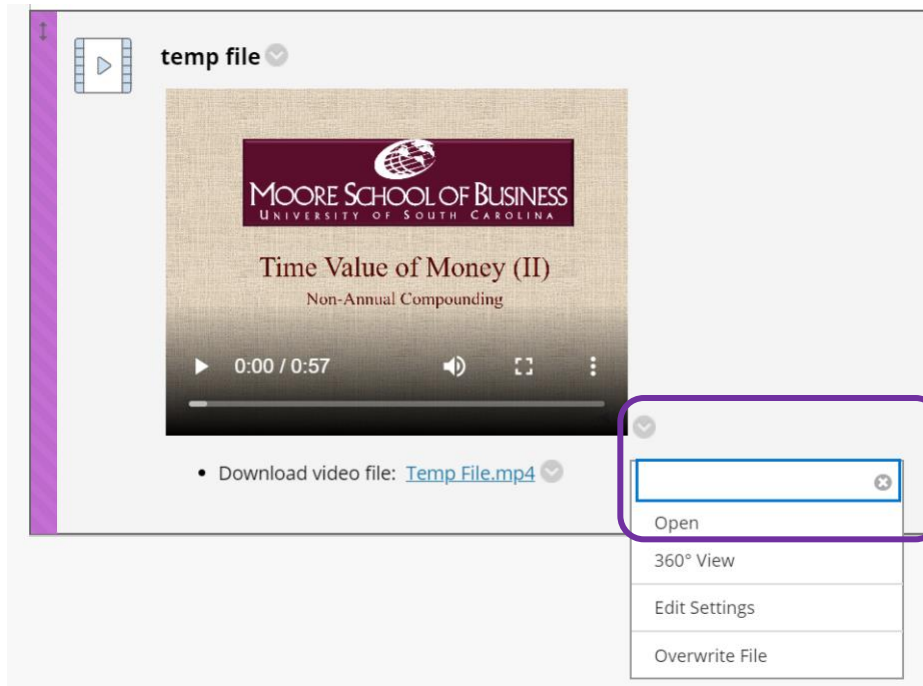
- The big limitation here is that it is basically a one shot process. You can pause the recording process – helpful when you have a cold and need to cough or blow your nose – but you don't get any editing ability. The workaround is that, if you mess up a particular slide, you can put a clean copy of the original slide in a separate file, record it again, save it, delete the messed up version, and copy and paste the improved version. Then do your processing.
- Posting to Blackboard
 - On your Blackboard page create the folders that you want to hold your videos. I organize by weekly topic. In the relevant folder, use the Build Content function and select Video.



- Select the relevant file and upload. Under Options you have some flexibility for how it is displayed.



- Once loaded, the video will look like the screen shot below. Tell your students to click on the arrow button at the lower right and select Open. This will display the video almost full screen.



What if you need greater flexibility to record more than just a Power Point presentation? Then you need a screen recording tool. The two that are university supported are Adobe Presenter, and Collaborate. Collaborate is a new tool that is embedded in Blackboard. It appears that Collaborate will be the tool that the university pushes in the near term. The primary limitation seems to be that professors have no ability to edit the videos captured by Collaborate. Thus, you can't cut out mistakes.

Sincerely
Eric Powers
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